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French Requiems from the Years 1877–1963 as Thanatological Communication

In accordance with Hans-Georg Gadamer's statement that every work of art is a message/text addressed to a receiver,¹ the present article constitutes an attempt to interpret the extra-musical content in selected French requiems from the period 1877–1963. We will concentrate in particular on the thanatological message, understood as the composer's communication on the subject of death, his attitude and relationship to this phenomenon and the realisation of an artistic vision of death in the musical work. The following therefore represents an hermeneutical interpretation, which will be based on the views of selected French musicographers, on the one hand, and on the cultural topos of the 'lullaby of death', on the other.

The analysis deals with requiems by Gabriel Fauré (1877–1901), Jehan Alain (1938), Joseph Guy Ropartz (1938), Maurice Duruflé (1947) and Alfred Descenclos (1963).²

In spite of the individualisation of the musical language of each of these composers and the fact that their works were written over the space of more than half a century, the compositions in question possess many features in common, which clearly distinguish them from other requiems from the same period, but also allow us to classify this output within a unique current of twentieth-century funeral mass settings. All the works (except for Alain's three-movement *Messe de Requiem*) contain virtually identical texts of the *Missa pro defunctis*. The composers omitted the sequence *Dies irae*, as well as the gradual and tract. Besides this, they added to their works texts from outside the funeral mass liturgy, namely the responsory *Libera me*, from the burial rites, and the antiphon *In paradisum*. What is more, in their settings of particular sections or

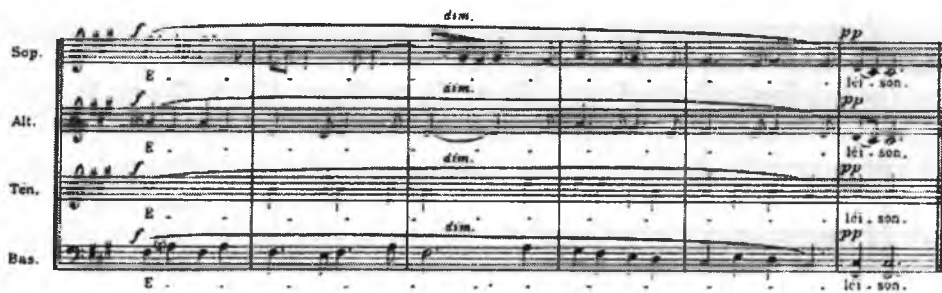
¹ See Leszek Polony, *Hermeneutyka i muzyka* [Hermeneutics and music] (Kraków, 2003), 52.

² The dates in brackets refer to the composing of the works under discussion.

Example 2. Maurice Duruflé, *Requiem*, Op. 9: Introit, bars 42–44. Fragment of the score: string quintet, choir and harp. Example of ostinato figures and *divisi* segregation of the low parts of the orchestra

Example 3. Joseph Guy Ropartz, *Requiem*: Agnus Dei, bars 37–41. Fragment of the piano reduction. Orchestral bridge containing lullaby figures

In addition, the masses are characterised by the sound of the low registers of the orchestra, the domination of the strings and the organ over the other sections of the orchestra, a predilection for major keys, the use of drones, mutes and dynamics ranging from *pianissimo possible* to *forte*, and elaborate melismata or vocalises in the vocal parts. (See Example 4).



Example 4. Alfred Desenclos, *Messe de Requiem*: Introit and Kyrie. Part of the choir, bars 112–117. Example of elaborate vocal melismata

The French thanatologist Louis-Vincent Thomas stated that everyone who speaks of death has some personal interest in it, wants to understand something, to come to terms with something, to play a game with death (chess or dice) before being obliged to.³ The fact that composers turned to the requiem genre undoubtedly reflects their inner need to talk about death, both in and beyond their music. When writing their works, these composers adopted a particular stance in respect to death, at the same time assuming a specific position in the thanatological discourse, even if they may not have been entirely aware of it. Their funeral masses were usually written in connection with powerful emotions following the loss of someone dear. Fauré, for instance, composed his *Requiem* after the death of his parents, and Duruflé dedicated his work to his deceased father. In the introduction to his work *La mort et l'occident de 1300 à nos jours*, Michel Vovelle remarked that death experienced mixes with death discussed,⁴ and so the experience of death passes smoothly into discourse on death – a discourse carried on by means of artefacts.

The starting point for reading the thanatological message are the utterances of the composers, in particular of Fauré, whose work and understanding of death made the strongest impression on the other composers. Fauré declared in one interview: 'My *Requiem* [...] it has been said that it does not express a fear of death. Someone called it a lullaby of death. But that is exactly how I perceive death: as a happy liberation, as the desire for happiness beyond the earth, and not as a pain-

³ Stanisław Rosiek, *Wstęp* [Introduction], in *Wymiary śmierci* [Aspects of death] (Gdańsk, 2002), 6.

⁴ Michel Vovelle, 'Historia ludzi w zwierciadle śmierci', in *Wymiary śmierci* [Aspects of death], 21 [Fr. Orig. 'L'histoire des hommes au miroir de la mort', in *La mort et l'Occident de 1300 à nos jours* (Paris, 1983)].

ful experience.⁵ That ‘lullaby of death’ seems to me to be a most apt metaphor encapsulating both the character and the mood of this work, as well as its thanatological conception. At the same time, it offers a key to the hermeneutical interpretation of Fauré’s *Requiem* and of funeral masses inspired by it. Due to the stylistic similarity of these works, or even the explicit declarations of some of the composers (especially Alain)⁶ as to their complete identification with Fauré’s worldview, the category of the ‘lullaby of death’ has been expanded to include the funeral mass settings by the other composers.

In the most general terms, this category constitutes a combination of the semantic field of ‘lullaby’ with the semantic field of ‘death’. This is a thanatological topos that appears quite commonly in many cultures and is characterised by a great diversity. The attempted interpretation of the funeral masses that follows is intended to show selected variants of this motif in a somewhat broader context, encompassing also literature and fine art, as well as music.

One of the most frequently encountered types of the topos of the ‘lullaby of death’ are *vanitas* motifs, especially popular during the Baroque in both art and poetry. One such example is the poem *Krótkość żywota* [The brevity of life] by Daniel Naborowski (1573–1640), who uses characteristic oxymora to draw the reader’s attention to the passing of time and the impermanence and fragility of human existence: ‘For many, the cradle was their grave, for many their mother a tomb [...]’.⁷ A similar message was borne by paintings depicting infants snoozing next to corpses, as in *Mors omnia aequat* by Hans Sebald Beham (1500–1550). (See Fig. 1).

This type of juxtaposing of opposites was also often employed in the Romantic era. One such example is the *Marche funèbre* from Fryderyk Chopin’s Sonata in B flat minor, Op. 35. This movement has a tripartite construction, with the two outer march-like sections in B flat minor contrasted with the middle section in the key of D flat major. This middle section is *de facto* a lullaby, containing numerous analogies to Chopin’s

⁵ ‘Mon *Requiem* [...] on a dit qu’il n’exprimait pas l’effroi de la mort, quelqu’un l’a appelé une berceuse de la mort. Mais c’est ainsi que je sens la mort: comme une délivrance heureuse, une aspiration au bonheur d’au-delà, plutôt que comme un passage douloureux.’, *Paris-Comoedia*, 3–9 March 1954, based on a conversation with Louis Aguettant from 1902, cit. after Jean-Michel Nectoux, *Fauré* (Paris, 1995), 70.

⁶ See Bernard Gavoty, *Jehan Alain – musicien français* (Paris, 1945), 185.

⁷ ‘[...] wielom była kolebka grobem, wielom matka ich mogiła [...]’. Cit. after *Poezja polska. Antologia* [Polish poetry. An anthology], selected by Anna Rajca and Jerzy Polanicki (Warsaw, 2005), 74.

later work the *Berceuse* in D flat major, Op. 57. The two pieces have an identical key and type of melody, and the structure of the accompaniment, based on the repeated figure of a spread triad and a constant rhythmic structure, is one of the most characteristic textural patterns in nineteenth-century piano lullabies (Example 5).

The subject of death in art is generally linked to reflection on the fleeting, transitory nature of human life and the mediaeval *memento mori*. Man usually casts aside thoughts of death as something alien, unknown, unpleasant, frightful, whereas art, as if to spite us, is constantly provoking such thoughts. Thus the funeral masses under discussion here may be interpreted within the context of *vanitas*, not only because they concern the problem of death, but above all because their composers speak of death in an antithetical way; that is, they juxtapose elements



Fig. 1. Hans Sebald Beham (1500–1550) *Mors omnia aequat*
(Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale)



Example 5. Fryderyk Chopin, *Marche funèbre* (Sonata in B flat minor, Op. 35),
middle section, bars 31–35. Example of lullaby texture

that are mutually exclusive, opposed to one another. In this example, it is the combining of the music of children (lullaby) and the music of death (requiem). This lack of decorum, if one may call it thus, acts more powerfully on the receiver, who cannot remain indifferent to the work and the theme it addresses. In addition, the presence of this kind of artistic means in a requiem evokes unequivocal associations with the *vanitas* motifs of baroque oxymora and with examples of Romantic irony.

Another type of the 'lullaby of death' is close to the former, but with the meanings reversed. Death becomes a cradle or crib, a birth, the beginning of something new, a foundation, the cornerstone of some idea. This may be, for example, a martyr's death, suffered in the name of higher values but bringing its rewards. In poetry, this topos usually appears in the constructions 'the grave as a cradle' or 'cradle grave'. A motif of this sort was used in the painting *Du berceau jusqu'à la tombe* by the Hungarian artist Michaly Zichy (see Fig. 2), and subsequently in Ferenc



Fig. 2. Michaly Zichy (1827–1906), *Du berceau jusqu'à la tombe*

Liszt's symphonic poem which it inspired. The idea of the painting is reflected in the formal construction of Liszt's work. *Von der Wiege bis zum Grabe* has three movements, corresponding to the three phases of human life: *Die Wiege* (The cradle), *Der Kampf ums Dasein* (The battle for existence), *Zum Grabe: Die Wiege des zukünftigen Lebens* (The grave, the cradle of the life to come). The first movement is an orchestration of the earlier piano work *Wiegenlied* (Lullaby). The composer uses string instruments here in high registers, as well as flute and harp, to suggest the innocence of the period in life represented by the Cradle. The middle movement, meanwhile, adheres to the monumental orchestral style of Liszt's previous symphonic works, with highly elaborate harmonies, which masterfully depict a 'struggle for existence'. The final movement contains a simplified texture, often confined to a single melodic line, e.g. that of the cellos towards the end of the work. This movement carries motivic and architectonic (ABA') references to the first. The similarity between the extreme movements of the work reflects a metaphysical comparison of the grave with the cradle, which is also an expression of deep religious faith in rebirth after death.⁸

The funeral masses under discussion are dominated by vitality, understood as the predominance of the realm of life over the realm of death. This is achieved by means of an accumulation of symbols, motifs, rhetorical means and musical attributes linked to the heavenly and angelic realm. These include the use of the tones of boys' choirs, of harps, organs, celestas and French horns in a *pianissimo* dynamic, the stylisation of melody on Gregorian chant, the creation of the illusion of paradise through the use of dedramatised narration, repeated rhythmic patterns and drones in the strings, the avoidance of strong dissonances and modulations, the use of slow tempos and soft dynamics, and also the use of lullaby figures and ascendant motifs. Elements of this sort are particularly abundant in the Introit (*Te decet*), Sanctus, 'Pie Jesu', Agnus Dei, *Lux aeterna* and *In paradisum*. In addition, the choice of these texts of the *Missa pro defunctis*, and especially the musical highlighting of those passages which speak of salvation and eternal life in paradise, relegates the theme of death and the infernal realm to the background, as is reinforced by the lack of the sequence *Dies irae*. What is more, the vitality of these funeral masses is even more distinct thanks to the presence of elements of the lullaby – a musical genre connected to childhood, and thus with the stage in human existence when life is developing most inten-

⁸ <http://www.egoldmidincd.com/cradle.html> and Ryszard Daniel Golianek, *Muzyka programowa XIX wieku. Idea i interpretacja* [Programme music of the 19th century. Ideas and interpretations] (Poznań, 1998), 150–151.

sively, in which anabolic processes are most strongly dominant over catabolic processes. This predominance of life over death can be identified with the motif of the 'grave as cradle', which is only substantiated in the context of Christian philosophy, and especially faith in the immortality of the soul and eternal life. Thus death is rebirth, the grave is the cradle of a new life.

The final way of interpreting the funeral masses concerns the topos of death as sleep. This is one of the oldest and most common motifs connected with death in European culture. It can be found in both Greek mythology and in the Bible. According to the former tradition, Thanatos, the god of death, and Hypnos, the god of sleep, were twin brothers born to Nyx, the goddess of the night. The biblical tradition, meanwhile, refers to 'death as sleep' in a somewhat different way. This motif contains the religious message that 'Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt' (Dan. 12:2).⁹ Thus the biblical death was understood, not as the end of human life in general, but only as the end of earthly life; it constituted, therefore, a sort of sleep, from which man would awake in the Last Judgment. And the early Christians reinforced this conviction in one another, deliberately employing terms related to sleep: 'Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope' (1 Thess. 4:13).¹⁰ Elements of euphemistic biblical language endured in later texts of the liturgy of the Catholic Church, especially in the funeral mass, where reference is made to 'eternal rest' rather than 'death'.

The motif of 'death as sleep' also occupied a crucial place in poetry, especially in mournful lyric verse. It most often appears here in the role of a euphemism, as in the well-known example from *Lament VII* by Jan Kochanowski: 'She was embraced by an iron, hard, interminable sleep [...]'.¹¹ This topos served a similar function in gravestone sculpture, particularly during the Renaissance, in which depictions of the dead were arranged as if for sleep (or rather a nap), with their head resting on one hand. Another variant of this motif are gravestones depicting infants asleep in their cradles. These were intended to soothe the pain of a child's parents, creating the illusion that the child did not die, but only fell asleep (see Fig. 3).

Our funeral masses can be interpreted in the context of the metaphysics of sleep, by dint of the lullaby elements which they contain, chiefly due to the links between the berceuse genre and the sphere of

⁹ *The NIV Study Bible* (London, 2000), 1297.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1789.

¹¹ Cit. after *Poezja polska. Antologia*, 63.



Fig. 3. Gravestone sculpture. Cemetery in Loctud, Finistère

‘music of the evening and the night’, as Mieczysław Tomaszewski aptly defined it,¹² but also due to the function played by the folk prototype of the genre, that is, the function of lulling a child to sleep. Thus the French composers spoke of death in their works as of falling asleep. In this, they referred to Leonardo da Vinci’s idea that death was a rest after a hard day. It is not, therefore, a painful experience, but rather a liberation from the hardship of life, as Fauré stated. By means of musical-literary euphemism, these composers avoided speaking directly of death, in order to assuage the negative emotions connected with it and to reassure the bereaved that those who had died would soon wake to everlasting life. In the musical sense, this euphemism involves the use of means that are untypical of the rhetoric of death – means which bring a mood of serenity, a sense of security, calm, optimism, hope and trusting faith.

This interpretation is confirmed in a way by the reactions of other commentators. In order to illuminate this question, I have assembled reviews, critiques and articles from scholarly texts, intended for the academic community or for the general public, devoted to the requiems in

¹² Mieczysław Tomaszewski, *Chopin. Człowiek, dzieło, rezonans* [Chopin. The man, his work and its resonance] (Poznań, 1998), 438.

question. These texts are the work of twentieth-century French musicographers, describing their impressions and reflections on hearing the works.¹³ They represent both ‘analytical’ and ‘analysis-generative’ reception.¹⁴ The terms that recur most often in these texts, especially terms characterising the mood of the works and constituting an attempt to interpret the extra-musical content, are set out below. Thus the ‘lullaby of death’ funeral masses are characterised by French musicographers by means of the following categories:

- sweetness, softness, mellowness (*douceur, suavité*), e.g. ‘sweet ambience’ (*climat doux*), ‘salutary chant’ (*le chant bienfaisant*), ‘sweet harmonies’ (*douces harmonies*), ‘ringed with a soft light’ (*auréolée d’une douce lumière*), ‘rare mellowness’ (*rare suavité*);
- peace (*paix*), calm, quietude (*apaisement, quiétude*), e.g. ‘a happy deliverance and calming’ (*une délivrance heureuse et un apaisement*), ‘full of peace’ (*toute de paix*), ‘a breath of calm spirituality’ (*un souffle d’une calme spiritualité*), ‘cradle-like motion’ (*mouvement comme celui du berceau*), ‘devoid of all anguish’ (*dépourvu de toute angoisse*);
- contemplation (*contemplation*), meditation (*recueillement*), e.g. ‘ambience of deep meditation’ (*climat de grand recueillement*), ‘medita-

¹³ These are texts by the following authors: Jehan Alain, Veronique Lamotte Ducoeur, Sylvain Pons, Philippe Robert, François-René Tranchefort and Luc Voirin. The list of categories is followed by examples, with the original French and the source given in the notes; highlighted are terms given in the list.

¹⁴ These terms are taken from Małgorzata Woźna-Stankiewicz’s work *Muzyka francuska w Polsce w II połowie XIX wieku* [French music in Poland during the second half of the nineteenth century] (Kraków, 1999), 13–14. In that author’s opinion, ‘analytical reception’ is the effect of the action of the receiver-scholar, and it gives rise to scholarly texts containing academic analysis or analysis-description and interpretation of a work in aesthetic and historical context. Woźna-Stankiewicz also includes in this group of documents of reception scholarly texts aimed at a general readership, which are characterised by ‘a modest immanent analysis [...] limited to general remarks on the formal aspect of a work and to a lesser extent concerning detailed problems of a purely musical nature’. ‘Analysis-generative reception’, meanwhile, ‘is a type of reception effected by critics’. ‘The utterance of the critic – to a greater degree than the utterance of the scholar – is of a spontaneous character. With the critic we have the direct transformation, as it were, of the experiencing and understanding of a work into a verbal utterance, which causes a partly unconscious choice of descriptive vocabulary from the “dictionary” of utterances about music and the arts that is current at a given time, including such terms which in the history of the reception of a given work have become permanently associated with it.’ Woźna-Stankiewicz also notes that the critic expresses common musical-cultural awareness and that in his text he documents the ‘horizon of expectations’ of the silent majority of receivers.

- tive atmosphere' (*atmosphère recueillie*), 'atmosphere of contemplation' (*atmosphère de contemplation*), 'ambience of serene piety' (*climat de piété sereine*), 'accompaniment of the soul' (*accompagnement de l'âme*), 'a breath of calm spirituality' (*un souffle d'une calme spiritualité*), 'profound chant' (*le chant profond*);
- serenity (*sérénité*), e.g. 'serene piety' (*piété sereine*), 'consolatory serenity' (*sérénité consolatrice*), 'atmosphere of contemplative serenity' (*atmosphère de sérénité contemplative*), 'an utterly unfunereal divertissement' (*un divertissement nullement funèbre*);
 - heavenly, celestial e.g. 'heavenly atmosphere' (*atmosphère céleste*), 'heavenly imploring' (*céleste imploration*), 'celestial light' (*lumière céleste*), 'mystical haze' (*brouillard mystique*);
 - angelism (*angélisme*), e.g. 'propitious angelism' (*angélisme propice*), 'perfectly angelic choir' (*chœur parfaitement angélique*);
 - consolation (*consolation*), e.g. 'consolatory serenity' (*sérénité consolatrice*), 'accompaniment of the soul towards its consolation' (*accompagnement de l'âme vers sa consolation*), 'consoling voice' (*voix consolant*), 'landscape of consoling sensibility' (*paysage de sensibilité consolant*);
 - sobriety (*sobriété*), plainness, asceticism (*dépouillement*), e.g. 'all dramatic effect is omitted' (*tout effet de dramatisation est omis*), '[...] have discarded all elements giving rise to human ire or distress' [... *ont écartés tous éléments inspirant la colère ou la détresse de l'homme*), 'far from the dramatic, superb, but convulsively heart-rending, harrowing works of a Verdi or a Berlioz' (*loin du dramatique, superbe mais convulsive déchirant, angoissant d'un Verdi ou d'un Berlioz*);
 - harmony (*harmonie*), order (*ordre*), e.g. 'harmonious proportions and harmonious eloquence' (*harmonieuses proportions et harmonieuse éloquence*);
 - confidence (*confiance*), e.g. 'ambience of confidence' (*climat de confiance*);
 - light (*lumière*), e.g. 'ringed by a soft, soothing light' (*auréolée d'une douce et apaisante lumière*), 'celestial light' (*lumière céleste*);
 - rest, repose (*repos*), e.g. 'one repouses' (*on respire*);
 - eternity (*éternité*), e.g. 'ambience of pure eternity' (*climat de pure éternité*).

These categories function in the texts of the French musicographers in complex linguistic contexts, occurring either independently of one another or else combined or mixed with one another. Additionally, they may refer to several works, to a single work, to part of a work or else to a particular aspect of the music. Given below are examples from these texts and also musical examples illustrating the ambiguity of these relations.

Sylvain Pons on Fauré's *Requiem*, Op. 48: 'it is a pure marvel, where the two main themes of the funeral liturgy – "**rest**" and "**light**" – have inspired the musician with accents of a **rare mellowness**'.¹⁵

Alain on the same work: '[...] offers us an utterly **unfunereal divertissement**. From the very first bars, one **reposes**. At last, **calm voices**, which can issue forth without the straining of a hoarse cockerel. [...] What **serenity**!'¹⁶

An anonymous critic on Duruflé's *Requiem*, Op. 9: 'A work that is **beautiful, noble, of a strong and virile gravity, ringed by a soft, soothing light**. [...] Everything here is **harmonious proportions and harmonious eloquence**. A landscape of **sensibility, peaceful, melancholic and consoling**, spreads out before the listener and brings to souls, **far from the dramatic, superb, but convulsively heartrending, harrowing** works of a Verdi or a Berlioz, the **profound and benevolent chant** that they anticipate'.¹⁷

François-René Tranchefort on Desenclos's *Messe de Requiem*: 'A very devout man, Desenclos has conceived this *Requiem* as a grand liturgical work that **forgoes all theatrical effects, all tragic elements, all dramatic tensions**, with the aim of creating an **atmosphere of contemplative serenity**'.¹⁸

Tranchefort on Duruflé's *Requiem*, Op. 9 (*In paradisum*): 'The little choir of children (or sopranos), a perfectly **angelic choir** which does

¹⁵ Sylvain Pons, *Angers-Musical* 5 March 1939, 129: '[...] est une pure merveille, où les deux thèmes essentiels de la liturgie funéraire, "**repos**" et "**lumière**" ont inspiré au musicien des accents d'une rare suavité.'

¹⁶ Cit. after Bernard Gavoty, *ibid.*: 'Après l'épreuve de la *Messe en ré*, le *Requiem* de Fauré offre un divertissement nullement funèbre. Dès les premières mesures, on respire. Enfin des voix posées, qui peuvent sortir sans des efforts de coq enroué! [...] Quelle sérénité!'

¹⁷ Cit. after Philippe Robert, 'Maurice Duruflé, sa vie, son œuvre', MA diss. (typescript), Université de Liège, 1978–1979, 51: 'une œuvre belle, noble, d'une forte et virile gravité, auréolée d'une douce et apaisante lumière. S'inscrivant dans la lignée spirituelle du *Requiem* de Fauré, mais différent nettement de celui-ci par le ton personnel du langage harmonique, de la mélodie (la pureté du grégorien y apparaît souvent) et par l'expression du lyrisme; le *Requiem* de Duruflé est en fait un admirable témoignage d'une haute tradition de civilisation musicale. Tout y est proportions harmonieuses et harmonieuse éloquence. Un paysage de sensibilité, paisible, mélancolique, consolant, s'offre à l'auditeur et apporte aux âmes, loin du dramatique, superbe mais convulsive déchirant, angoissant d'un Verdi ou d'un Berlioz, le chant profond et bienfaisant qu'elles attendent.'

¹⁸ François-René Tranchefort (ed.), *Guide de musique sacrée et chorale profane de 1750 à nos jours* (Paris, 1993), 229: 'Très croyant, Desenclos a conçu ce *Requiem* comme une grande pièce liturgique bannissant volontairement tout effet théâtral, tout élément tragique, toute tension dramatique, dans l'intension de créer une atmosphère de sérénité contemplative.'

not venture far beyond that of Fauré, an almost absolute model. A sort of **mystical haze**, doubtless a trifle vaporous, created by the orchestra with the notable contribution of the harp. The **celestial entreaty** of the little choir is joined by the organ and the other choral groups in a brief crescendo. And the whole thing ends in a **breath of calm spirituality** at the assurance of **eternal repose**, and on a **sweet chord** of an unresolved dominant ninth'.¹⁹ (See Example 6).

Tranchefort on Fauré's *Requiem*, Op. 48: '[...] and his *Requiem*, which **s pares us the thunderous *Dies irae***, is not liturgical, but **accompanies the soul** towards its **consolation**, towards its **eternity** (the brief appearance of the sequence *Dies irae* in the *Libera me* is a sort of antithesis, which enhances this **consolatory serenity**)'.²⁰

(Sanctus) 'The crossed arpeggios of the harps and the violas *divisi* create an **atmosphere of contemplation and of propitious angelism**'.²¹ (See Example 7).

(*In paradisum*) 'The **angelism** of the Sanctus returns here [...] The choir brings a discrete support, at the same time as a conclusion **full of peace and deep meditation**'.²² (See Example 8).

Veronique Lamotte Ducoeur on Alain's *Messe de Requiem* (Agnus Dei): 'The composer wanted an **ambience of sweetness and reverie**. He suggests to the organist that this section be registered with the *dolce* stop, with which he could mix the *vox angelica*, but only if it is very soft'.²³ (See Example 9).

¹⁹ Ibid., 241: 'Petit chœur d'enfants (ou des sopranos), chœur parfaitement angélique qui ne se démarque pas davantage de celui de Fauré, modèle presque absolu. Sorte de "brouillard mystique", sans doute un rien vapoureux, créé par l'orchestre avec le concours remarqué de la harpe. À la céleste imploration du petit chœur viennent se joindre l'orgue et les autres groupes choraux en bref crescendo. Et tout s'achèvera en un souffle d'une calme spiritualité sur l'assurance du Repos éternel, et sur un doux accord de neuvième de dominante non résolu.'

²⁰ Ibid., 278: '[...] et son *Requiem*, qui fait l'économie d'un fracassant *Dies irae*, n'est pas liturgique, mais accompagnement de l'âme vers sa consolation, son éternité (la brève résurgence de la prose du *Dies irae* dans le "*Libera me*" valorise, par antithèse, cette sérénité consolatrice).'

²¹ Ibid.: 'Les arpèges entrecroisés des harpes et des altos divisés créent une atmosphère de contemplation et d'angélisme propice [...]'.
²² Ibid.: 'L'angélisme du Sanctus repaît là [...] Le chœur apporte un soutien discret, en même temps qu'une conclusion toute de paix et de grand recueillement.'

²³ Veronique Lamotte Ducœur, *Rompre la silence de la mort, les messes de requiem en France de Renaissance de Vatican II* (Université Strasbourg 2, 2002), 316: 'Le compositeur a voulu un climat doux et réveur. Il suggère à l'organiste de registrer cette pièce avec des fonds doux auquel il pourra mélanger la voix céleste, mais uniquement si elle est très douce.'

IX. In Paradisum

Andante moderato (♩ = 58)

2 GRANDES FLUTES
(à défaut d'Orgue)
1 CLARINETTE
en LA
1 COR en FA
CELESTA
1 HARPE
ORGUE
SOPRANOS
ALTOS
TÉNORS
BASSES
Andante moderato (♩ = 56)
1^{re} VIOLONS
Div. en 2
2^{es} VIOLONS
Div. en 2
ALTOS
VIOLONCELLES
CONTREBASSES

Example 6. Maurice Duruflé, *Requiem*, Op. 9: *In paradisum*

Example 7. Gabriel Fauré, *Requiem*, Op. 48: Sanctus, part of the choir, strings, harp and organ, bars 5–8

Veronique Lamotte Ducoeur on Joseph Guy Ropartz's *Requiem*: 'This *Requiem* was often compared to that of Fauré. Indeed, the two composers have **discarded all elements giving rise to human ire or distress**. That is why their works exude **quietude and calm**'.²⁴

(Introit) 'The Introit, assigned to a five-voice choir [...] begins at a slow tempo and in an **atmosphere of meditation**. [...] The gradual doubling of the voices (altos, tenors) on a tonic pedal in the orchestra closed this section in **simplicity and serenity**'.²⁵

²⁴ Ibid., 313: 'Ce *Requiem* fut souvent comparé celui de Fauré. En effet, les deux compositeurs ont écartés tous éléments inspirant la colère ou la détresse de l'homme. C'est pourquoi, leurs œuvres respirent la quiétude et l'apaisement.'

²⁵ Ibid., 308: 'L'Introït, confié à un chœur à 5 voix [...] débute dans un mouvement lent et atmosphère recueillie. [...] Le dédoublement progressif de voix (altos, ténors) sur une pédale de tonique l'orchestre clôt la pièce dans une simplicité et sérénité.'

This musical score excerpt shows the beginning of the Sanctus from Gabriel Fauré's Requiem, Op. 48. It includes staves for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, Violins I and II, Violas, Cellos, Double Basses, and Organ. The tempo is marked 'Andante mod^{te}' with a metronome marking of 58. The organ part is marked 'p dolce' and includes the instruction '[Métro Gauche et Va. droite]'. The string parts are marked 'p' and 'moderato'. The organ part has a 'AL 20 114' marking.

Example 8. Gabriel Fauré, *Requiem*, Op. 48: Sanctus, part of the choir, strings, harp and organ, bars 5–8

This musical score excerpt shows the beginning of the Agnus Dei from Jehan Alain's Messe de Requiem. It includes staves for Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), Bass (B.), and Organ (Org.). The tempo is marked 'Assez lent et uniforme, mais d'une expression contenue'. The organ part is marked 'p' and includes the instruction 'sans 16''. The vocal parts are marked 'mf' and 'pp'.

Example 9. Jehan Alain, *Messe de Requiem*: Agnus Dei

1 HARPE

p dolce

Andantino (♩ = 66)

VIOLONS

II

ALTOS

VIOLONCELLES
Div. en 4

CONTRÉBASSES

Div. 30 et 40 arco

p dolce

Example 10. Maurice Duruflé, *Requiem*, Op. 9: Agnus Dei, part of the strings and harp, bars 1–4

(‘Pie Jesu’) ‘The “Pie Jesu” is a short section in D major based on a dialogue between the solo soprano and the choir in an **ambience of deep meditation**’.²⁶

Luc Voirin on Maurice Duruflé’s *Requiem*, Op. 9 (Agnus Dei): ‘The vocal quartet, harp and violas pray to the Lamb of God in a regular motion, **like that of a cradle**’.²⁷ (See Example 10).

The observations, reactions and analyses of the French musicographers converge to a large extent with the interpretation proposed in the first part of the present text. They draw attention to the presence of a rhetoric that is untypical of the tradition of requiem settings, expressed in the ‘softness’, ‘mellowness’, ‘sobriety’ and ‘calm mood’ of a work. Other terms used, meanwhile, such as ‘sweetness’, ‘serenity’, ‘confidence’, ‘repose’ and ‘consolation’, serve a euphemistic and consolatory function. Finally, ‘angelism’, ‘eternity’, ‘heavenly’, ‘light’ and ‘lullaby’ are attributes of vitality, of Christian hope and faith in eternal life.

This character to the funeral masses discussed here places them in an exceptional position compared to other works in this genre from the same period. In aesthetical terms, and from the perspective of the extra-musical theological and thanatological references, they comprise a wholly distinct category of settings in requiem history, and – as we can see from

²⁶ Ibid., 311: ‘*Le Pie Jesu* est une pièce brève en ré majeur basée sur un dialogue entre le soprano solo et le chœur dans un climat de grand recueillement.’

²⁷ Ibid., 263: ‘Le quatuor vocal, la harpe, et les alto prient l’Agneau de Dieu dans un mouvement régulier comme celui du berceau.’

works composed during the last few decades (Arlen Clarke, Karl Jenkins, Joonas Kokkonen, John Rutter, Fredrik Sixten, Andrew Lloyd Webber) – this tradition has many continuators.

Translated by John Comber

